

REGISTERED ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST JOB ANALYSIS QUESTIONNAIRE

In July of this year the Department of Health Services signed a contract with CPS Human Resource Services to revalidate the REHS exam. The entire process will take three years. So far we have convened three panels of Subject Matter Experts (SME) in southern and northern California. SMEs are technically competent practitioners in the field of environmental health. The panels were made up of registered environmental health specialists from rural, urban and suburban communities. Panel members were chosen to represent all the program elements covered in the exam. This was not an easy task since we had to limit the participants to 6-8 people and we have 18 program elements. The southern panel wrote the task statements, these 78 statements describe in detail what you do daily as well as less frequent activities. The northern panel wrote the knowledge and skill statements these 209 statements detail what you need to know to perform your duties. A third panel was convened again in the north to edit the two groups of statements. The task, knowledge and skill statements will be compiled into a QUESTIONNAIRE for distribution statewide. Task statements will be rated by frequency and importance. A task may be frequent and unimportant or infrequent and very important or any other combination. The knowledge and skill statements will be rated on frequency and needed at registration. In this way we can use the information for more than test development. The final document will include demographic information so that we can be assured that our results are representative of the entire environmental health field. Demographic information will include geographic location, population served, job classification, gender, level of education, ethnicity, and program specialty.

The results of the questionnaire will be used to write a test plan that identifies the level of detail, variety of subject matter and relative weight of test items per program element. For example if no one identifies the tasks, knowledge or skills used in the noise element no questions would be developed for that program. Currently up to 5% of the questions may be on noise issues. To be legally justified each question has to have some basis in a task currently performed. Every question currently in the item bank will be reviewed for accuracy, clarity and conformance to the test plan. New questions will be written by another panel of Subject Matter Experts to fill any holes identified in the test plan.

Along with the test plan, the results of the questionnaire will be the basis for a review of the currently required educational curriculum. This information will be used to determine if the course requirements need to be modified to address changing educational needs of the profession. Knowledge statements have been developed on each of the basic science course requirements: biology; inorganic and organic chemistry; physics; microbiology and calculus. Additionally, the results will be used to help us identify training needs in county training plans and university degree programs. The training plans will have a detailed listing of competencies needed on the job and for the exam. The university degree programs include course work in applied environmental health; this listing helps to identify real world applications that will translate into the classroom. Another way the information will be used is to develop a current occupational description for recruitment in high schools, community colleges and universities.

All in all the usefulness of this information can not be overstated: revision of the registered environmental health specialist exam; revised curriculum requirements; updated occupational bulletin; and improved training programs. And it is totally dependent on the quality of information we receive. I implore you to take the time to carefully review and complete this questionnaire. I know you are being pushed to the limit with reduced resources and increased demands for service. The last thing you need is yet another apparently useless survey. However, I assure you that this questionnaire will not be useless if it is carefully and accurately completed. I believe we have a chance to change the course of our profession and the field of environmental health, please give your full attention to this request when you receive the questionnaire.

Thank you for your time and energy on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Margaret Blood, REHS